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righteousness and love, fresh as it fell from the lips of him who spake as never man spoke before, as never man has spoken since the days of his flesh. In just such love as he proclaimed and exemplified lies the only surcease of sorrow for a distraught world. Without it, the letter of the law prevails—and kills; with it as the informing principle, the spirit rules with all its life-giving power. In its exercise the individual finds at once his richest joy and his greatest usefulness. In its practical exemplification society must find the only solvent capable of producing and

maintaining the fluency of the social order. Only in proportion as men, rooted and grounded in love, are strong inwardly to apprehend what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth the knowledge of the world, can the life of men be filled unto all the fulness of God. To effect such a plenitude of life is the challenge of this hour to the church of Jesus Christ. Only so can Christianity complete the liberation of the world and make the world safe for all things good and beautiful and true.

SHALL WE DISCARD THE LIVING CHRIST?

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Just when we are told that the world is not interested in theology we find ourselves confronted by theology, for however we may obscure the issue, the present situation of the world proposes the question as to whether Jesus' teaching is idealistic speculation or divine revelation. That is to raise the old christological discussions in a new form, pragmatic rather than metaphysical. The Jesus who is a memory is different from the Jesus who is a present divine power.

Nothing has been more characteristic of the Christian religion from the time of Paul to the present day than the belief that its founder is not dead but alive; and not only alive but active in this present world, so that believers may point definitely to this and that as his specific work and even meet him face to face in real, immediate communion. I say from the time of Paul; for to the primitive Jewish Christians, Jesus was not an immanent world-spirit in any

such sense. He was alive but inaccessible until his second coming on the clouds of heaven. The Holy Spirit poured out upon his disciples and the power of his Name in healing and exorcism were gifts of his, to be sure, but they were not conceived to be evidence of his presence on earth. He *was* not the Holy Spirit; he sent it down from heaven. It was Paul's experience on the Damascus road that changed the conception of Christ for all future Chris-

tians. Christ there was revealed not *to* him, by some rending of the heavens, but "in him," as he tells the Galatians (Gal. 1:15, 16) in describing his conversion. In other words, it seems likely that Paul conceived of Christ as immanent, as well as transcendent, and immediately present in the hearts of believers. In his immanent aspect Christ was a cosmic spirit, in the same category of existence with the demonic spirits and angels who peopled Paul's universe. As a man could be possessed by a demon, so he could be possessed by Christ. To the end of Paul's life there remained a definite object called Christ in his inner consciousness, which was the controlling center of his life. Paul felt that all he had to do was to let this possessing spirit act through him and he could not go wrong. He was unable to live up to his ideals through his own strength; but now that difficulty was over, for he was not Paul any longer, but Christ, just in so far as he remained united in intimate fellowship with his guiding spirit.

This belief was the source of Paul's amazing energy, self-confidence, and influence; and in one form or another it has been a part of Christian belief ever since. It has never been thoroughly understood, of course. The Greek church degraded it from a spiritual to a physical concept and made the sacraments the only method of participating in the divine nature of Christ, thus removing the personal communion which was the heart of Paul's religious life. The Latin church interpreted Paul's mystic "faith" in Christ as requiring merely assent to the doctrines of the church, which is the body

of Christ. Nowhere was it recognized that to Paul the Holy Spirit and Christ meant one and the same thing. Still there were always genuine "Christ-mystics" both in the East and in the West, though their communion with Christ was seldom practically fruitful like Paul's; and when finally Luther set justification by faith at the center of Protestant theology, Paul's experience became the typical Protestant experience. The living Christ is today a more essential part of what we call the "evangelical" religious experience than is the Jesus of the Gospels. It is the living Christ who converts and regenerates men in the Bowery Mission; whose spirit moves men at Billy Sunday's meetings; who is the source of moral power to millions of humble Christians the world over. If we were to ask for a definition of Christianity from the rank and file of church members, there would be a large group that would answer: "Moral regeneration and sanctification through the power of the living Christ."

What is this experience of the living Christ, and how is it related to the person of the historic Jesus? I suppose it might be described as the reinforcement of the individual will by conscious and continual submission to the personal influence of a personified ideal—an ideal which, moreover, the believer feels to be grounded in the nature of things and really as well as imaginatively present in power. I have said nothing about the relation of this ideal to the actual character of Jesus of Nazareth, because very often, if not generally, the ideal is derived from elsewhere. What seizes and transforms the

drunkard is the ideals he was taught in childhood. What a youth yields to when he joins the church is the moral standard prevalent in his church—very often copied from the popular morality of the district. Sometimes conversion is an even more fundamental overturn than this, a recrudescence under some favoring stimulus of the deep-lying social instincts, too long suppressed under a mass of selfish impulses and habits. In such cases the Christ who redeems is the parental instinct itself, the spirit of love that lies dormant in us all, the "light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." In one or another sublimated form this instinct is appealed to in practically all experiences of the living Christ that are ethically fruitful like Paul's, and not merely mystical. It is powerfully or feebly fostered by the more or less vigorous moral consciousness of the local church.

The living Christ is a composite photograph of the best Christians the new convert sees about him. He is the embodiment of that group consciousness of the church which—when in times of stress it is sufficiently aroused to order—is known as the Holy Spirit. Speaking theologically then the living Christ is the more or less perfect incarnation of the eternal Logos, or Spirit of Love, which results when a man comes under the influence of the Holy Spirit speaking through the church. This incarnation is achieved by the continual influence of the ideal upon the actual. The ideal of yesterday is the actuality of today; the ideal of today is a new and more glorious thing. This ever actualized, ever glorified ideal is the living Christ.

"And all of us, with unveiled faces, reflecting like bright mirrors the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same likeness, from one degree of radiant holiness to another, even as derived from the Lord the Spirit." (II Cor. 3:18, Weymouth's translation).

We are ready now to consider whether the name "living Christ" is appropriate; in other words, whether the historic Jesus is in any sense to be found in this ideal figure. That is a very hard question to answer unequivocally. In the first place, even if one happens to attribute to the living Christ a character precisely like that of the historic Jesus, does the historic Jesus really speak to him in that ideal figure? Is there an objective reality to the living Christ, or is this but a figment of the imagination? Very much depends on our conception of the relation of the great souls of the past to present history. Are the immortal dead kept in some air-tight heaven where earth's hum can never reach them, or can they still do something to direct the stream of history in which they once so nobly struggled? To ask that question is to realize that even those of us who hold most firmly to the doctrine of immortality have not fitted it into our new conception of the universe. It is an anomaly, an excrescence, and gives us no help in the formulation of other doctrines. Personally I think that no immortality would be worth keeping unless one could continue to strive for the same causes that one now serves, and continue to be part of the same process of social evolution as now. If Jesus is in any sense working in this

world today, it is in the continual outcropping of that parental instinct of love of which he is the chief embodiment in history, and more especially in the lives of those who strive to work out the principle of love to its ultimate consequences in an ever-changing environment.

Why cannot we Protestants adopt the Catholic doctrine of the "communion of saints" and believe that there is no real gap between the churches on earth and the church in heaven, but that the living and the dead form one body, with Christ as head, bound together in such intimate union that the moral victory of one is the moral victory of all? For me there is no intellectual impediment to such a view. I must admit, however, that, though I do not find the objective identity of the living Christ and the historic Jesus logically inconceivable, the subjective variations in the conception of the living Christ actually held by Christians are so great as to make it difficult to affirm such identity. "Christ" is simply the reflex of local moral codes, if we are to judge from appearances; and often enough he is made to act as the protagonist of pharisaic ideals that the Jesus of history fought against all his life. I should like to observe, nevertheless, that the same variation of subjective judgment exists with reference to our conception of God and our conception of the historic Jesus; and in neither case do we conclude that no objective reality gives rise to these fluctuating subjective estimates. I am strongly inclined to assert that there is a present reality working in the world which is substantially identical with the personality of Jesus of Naza-

areth. The lines along which identity can be traced are the following:

1. With a very considerable proportion of Christians the basis of their conception of the living Christ is the picture of Jesus which they find in the Gospels. Jesus thus lives in their minds substantially as he lived in Galilee, though of course the picture is very imperfect. If there be no such thing as personal immortality, Jesus has at least this immortality of influence.

2. The personality of Jesus was, as John put it, the incarnation of the Logos. We might say that it was the supreme example of a character based on the parental instinct, in which all the social instincts had free play, and so there was no warping or frustration of original human nature, as all instincts were given their due place as ministers to the central purpose of love. Now original human nature is the same today as it was in Jesus, and in each of us it is striving to work itself out into the same harmonious and satisfying pattern of life that we see in him—not identically the same, no doubt, but the same in general type. Or, as John would say, the Logos which was incarnate in Jesus seeks to reincarnate Himself in us.

3. There is besides what is commonly called the "operation of the Holy Spirit," that sense of moral guidance which many Christians have. It is true, as I have already pointed out, that this is largely the product of local and temporary moral codes; but so great was the initial impress of Jesus' personality upon his followers that I cannot think that its effects have ever ceased, and even when we do not consciously go to the Jesus of history for

guidance and inspiration we are getting from a thousand sources his own personal influence, transmitted from generation to generation of Christians.

4. Finally, we see in Jesus a revelation of the eternal God. Jesus may have ceased to exist, or may have passed beyond our ken, but the same God who meets us in Jesus' life meets us in the life of the world today.

Here the question at once arises, however, whether communion with the living God is not so all-inclusive an experience that it makes unnecessary the whole conception of the living Christ; whether, in fact, the experience of the living Christ does not weaken our sense of God and blur the picture of the historic Jesus at the same time, and so is to be discarded for religious and moral reasons. Now I quite agree that the all-inclusive experience is the experience of God, and all other experiences should minister to it if they are to be worth fostering. What I do not agree with is the tendency to remove all intermediaries between God and man. I think God is best seen, in fact only seen, through intermediaries, and that therefore a "thick" philosophy, as James would say, gives a much richer sense of God's presence than a "thin" philosophy, as well as according much better with the facts of life in all their variegated beauty. The more forms in which we visualize God, the better, provided they lead us up to the fountainhead. This I believe the conception of the living Christ is able to do in its own peculiar way, so that it deserves to be kept distinct from other conceptions. There is and always will be a place for an idealized Jesus, in whom

are embodied the ideals of our own day, as well as the qualities which we admire in the historic Jesus. If we have such an ideal and recognize its distinctness in certain respects from the historic Jesus, we shall not be led into the error of reading our ideals back into the historic Jesus. We shall be able, as Gerald Birney Smith suggests, to treat Jesus as we treat the Bible, with perfect intellectual candor, not requiring him to conform to our ideals, but giving him liberty to be what he may be. If personal immortality be a fact, and Jesus really is working in the world today, we must suppose his ideals to have developed to meet the changing vicissitudes of history, just as the conception of the living Christ, the embodiment of the Christian ideal, has developed in the consciousness of the church.

The question is indeed open whether it be not better to discard the historic Jesus than to discard the living Christ. The living Christ is a safe guide for today, for he embodies ideals that have been painfully achieved since the time of Jesus; but the historic Jesus has nothing definite to say to us on some of the greatest questions of our day—international questions, social questions, and the like. It may be that he lived a perfectly sinless life two thousand years ago, but how does that help us, who have to live under such different conditions? Now I do not feel any great force in these arguments. The historic Jesus is just as much our prophet and Savior as he ever was, and he is absolutely necessary to our guidance and salvation at two vital points where the living Christ fails us:

1. It makes a tremendous difference that Jesus really lived; that the ideals which he represented in his teaching were really proved practicable in his life. It is this that makes him our Savior, that under typical human conditions he met and mastered the forces of evil to which most of us yield. Conditions have changed somewhat, it is true, but the fundamental evils that killed Jesus' body but could not kill his spirit are with us today, as Rauschenbusch makes so plain. At critical points in our moral history, when we are tempted to give up our ideals and yield to expediency, it is the historic Jesus alone that can give firmness to our wavering wills and minds. If the living Christ can do this it is only because we are firmly convinced that none of these new Christian ideals are out of harmony with the ideals which the historic Jesus successfully incarnated. Without the historic Jesus as its firm foundation the conception of the living Christ is powerless to help us in such crises.

2. It is to the historic Jesus that we go for new ethical insight into new social situations. Hermann is quite right in his observation that as a rule the living Christ does not free our souls and lure them on to new heights of perfection as the historic Jesus does. The living Christ gives us a vivid realization of the ideals we already hold, and helps us to live up to them; but when new moral issues arise he cannot help us. It is an easily verifiable fact that members of evangelical churches who make most of the doctrine of the living Christ are remarkable for moral vigor but lacking in ethical discrimination.

What they need is a more intensive study of the character of the historic Jesus. If that will not convict them of sin and make ethical reformers of them, nothing will; not even the study of ethics will do it so well, for there is more in the personality of Jesus than ever has been or even can be crammed into a system of ethics. "What would Jesus do in this situation?" is very near to the final rule of conduct, even though the historic Jesus never found himself in that situation; for as the classic embodiment of the attitude of love there is something finally authoritative about the ethical pattern of his life, about the attitude in which he stands over against his environment. He is not to be taken as an arbitrary authority; his own example is opposed to such a procedure; but he is to be made an inspiring counselor and guide in our own efforts to solve ethical problems.

Experience has taught most of us that in Jesus are to be found truths that we afterward discover running through all life and blazoned across the face of the heavens—but we should never have found them in life if we had not first found them in Jesus. Experience has taught us that on the whole it is safe to trust Jesus' principles—his central principles, that is—even when it is impossible at first to verify them in life; for many times a persecuted sect like the Quakers, by steadfast adherence to ridiculed and apparently impracticable ethical principles which they believed they found in Jesus, has at length proved that these principles *are* practicable. As long as Jesus continues to do this for us he is our supreme prophet.

I must still insist, however, that alongside the conception of the historic Jesus, and constantly interacting with it, we need to retain the conception of the living Christ; for it keeps before our minds in vivid form the whole body of ideals that have developed in the course of Christian history as the necessary result of the reaction of Jesus' spirit upon changing social environments, and it gives us moral power to live up to them. If there is one thing that we miss in the liberal Christianity which more and more prevails, it is that sense of the presence of a great sustaining moral power which used to be the glory of the evangelical churches. Ethical sensitiveness is here aplenty in the

liberal movement, but I am not so sure about moral power. If this diagnosis be correct the conception must be rescued. It must of course be constantly corrected and replenished by comparison with the Jesus of the Gospels, as conscience is constantly corrected by reflection and by new insight into one's own deepest desires; but it can no more be done away with than conscience itself. The living Christ is the most vital and intimate form in which God comes to us; and in all but the more extreme and doubtful cases his voice—which is at once the voice of God, of Jesus, and of the Spirit in the church—should be for us authoritative.